Dear Jim, Post as propagandist-what today's newest leak can mean to us 11/26/76

While I've been expecting more of this kind of Goebbels operation today's story is not what I expected. I've not even filed the file I started 11/13 when we were in Stevens Point.

I don't know what the story really says. It is too early for the paper.

First I heard a very brief account a little after 3, when I awakened and went back to sleep. When I awakened again about 5 and did get up I heard an item a little longer, by coincidence the first item on waking. The second one says that the CIA's electronic surveillance caught LHO offering the Russian information in return for a trip to Russia.

Those Post reporters and editors sure are the keenest! They ask all the searching questions, reason solidly and are determined not to be had again, as they were on the 11/13 story. So the double-check, consult dependable sources, etc. Lile Kesler told me, they're not proud of the 11/13 gulling.

So when he went to Mexico to make a deal with the Russian to get to Russia Oswald wanted to go by way of Cuba, perhaps the only place in the western world from which it was hard to get to Russia?

What priceless information he had! All the darkest secrets he learned while greasing coffee machines. Until he graduated to ostensible unemployment. Can't you imagine the secrets he learned in daytime prowling of the area of Canal and Camp in N.O.? The Russkies were crazy not to accept that offer, weren't they?

No wonder the Post went with the story. Or that Kesler, in his lack of pride in his sheet, had Volume 26 opened to CE 2952 when he phoned me the other night, the Hoover letter that says the most diligent FBI investigation disclosednot even an indirect LHO intelligence connection or political one with the Cubans of their friends.

Kesler, by the way, is a synthetic would-be old-time reporter who will do anything for what he considers a scoop. He does not give a dumn is he can get it printed and he has told me that in the past. He wants to do investigative reporting. Remember the rotten thing he did with Harper on RFK and what he would not use and the retraction the Post would not print when he obviously said what Harper could not have said?

On the face this is an unreasonable, illogical story. There is no way if it were legitimate that the Russians would not have said this at or shortly after the time of the crime, when the world had cooled some. It would for them have ended once and for all the US, particularly the CIA effort, to make it look like the Russians were behind it, what scared the hell out of LBJ, with CIA help-read Phillips.

Whether the CIA would have kept its silence is not as certain but I think it unlikely, given their political interests of the time. There was also the great risk in not telling both the FBI and the Commission, certainly Johnson. LBJ was worried about people thinking he was behind it. He and Russell had a discussion along this line. Russell told him suspcions would never end.

I do not believe it is likely that this secret would have been kept. It is a fake, even if they come up with the intercept in LHO's voice. Remeber, I have this covered several ways with the CIA- with an all-inclusive request and with a separate one that I then wrote further about when CIA tried to ignore it, saying it was because I did not want to wait until some time in the remote future when they complete whatever they call a review of all their records. O instead they months later leak it to the uncritical Post/

On which Kesler tells me he alone is now assigned to the JFK story.

The first such leak convinced me that the time is now for filing for damages from non-compliance. I know the question is time. As it is with their destruction that is up-coming

These two leaks within a fortnight should be of help before Green and Robinson, in different ways. Before Robinson on the question of security classification, observance

and genuineness; before Green on the probabilities of what she has done to me, which we can't do that way directly but can in terms of what the government does and its cost to me and to the country.

This is one of the more brazen propaganda operations. I fear there is no element of the press that will either say so or even look into it. Me was unwilling for the Times to do it with the so-called Hoover memo. That is, he did not see them doing it when I told him there is such a story and how obvious it is and easy to get the proof.

It is fascinating that all this is leaked to the Post. Whether it has a special position of the spooks think the Times will be more critical I've not stopped to think about. That it happens after my fairly strong complaint to Katy Graham, one that a decent publisher would be asking some questions a out, also is interesting because I've heard from none of them.

Sidebar: during the briadcast to Schnectady Monday night, to a show with a thoughtful moderator, he arranged it first so that Howard and I could talk during canned commercials and the news and then so Bob Saltzman could join us and not be aired, for about 10 minutes during the news. Saltzman said that he and Howard Simons, Post managing editor, went to the same college at different times, that he had an article in the alumni magazine, that Simons read it and invited him down. The be repeated soon. When he got there he was ushed into the executive suite, near of next to Graham's office, into a fancy conference room. All the editors were there to meet with him, I think he said from the morning to about one. He did name some. I recall Bradlee and Simons. They have all this interest and don't talk to us? As I remember it Saltzman said he wrote about computerized information retrieval on the JFK assassination and its possibilities, what he has proposed to the new House committee. (I cautioned him about the past in the garbage-piles of the mind on this.)

I could conjecture endlessly on motive, on what someone hopes to accomplish by all of this. The correlation with the new committee can't be ignored. Neither leak seems designed to deter continuation of the committee. It can be argued that either, more both, will be powerful reason for the House continuing the committee. In turn this means what one ordinarily would not expect, that the spooks want the committee continued. I'm not going into this because long ago I said that with the Downings and Gonzalezes, later Fauntroys in charge the spooks can use this once and for all to cleanse themselves, as with sewer drainings. I'm saying it because it is the fact. If along the Schweiker line, which means ultimate spook exculpation.

It hurts no gxxx agency now to confess that some underling failed in his obligations. I can see CIA throwing Helms into the meatgrinder, the FBI t ose who were in Hoover's disfavor.

I am saying that both agencies have much to hide and this leads away from what they want to hide. There can, ultimately, be a followup on this, back to square one, that LHO was irrational. Of course he had no secrets and thus could not have made such a deal.

One can even see that this could be aimed at detente and reduced military expenditures.

But it certainly is aimed at the present situation and it certainly does establish damage to me with my FOIA re quests of both agencies covering all and for lo hong having been entirely ignored.

I wrote the foregoing before daylight, before the paper came. It is here about 7. I got it and sure enough (I've not yet read it) there is Ron Kessler's by-line on page 1. I turned the TV on to pick the early news up. I get CBS from Baltimore now that WTOP tapes it and aires ti an hour later. Switched from channel to channel at the opening and learned that ABC has Agee live from London later in the hoyr, so I'll have to monitor it for the coming hour. The lead news item from Washington on CBS attributes this to Phillips via AP, with mention of the Post. So I guess instant analysis is still possible. ABC carried the item attributed to the Post only. We'll see if anyone asks why Phillips waited so long to speak out and how this fits his "defense" of the CIA.

FOIA again: you realize that the CIA is supposed to have complied with my requests about a year ago, giving me what is supposed to be all the Mexico stuff, without any record indicating any such thing and with much from Phillips of an entirely different nature, one inconsistent with his silence on this, one in which his name is in every case masked. Remember my references to the script for a Seven Days in November? That my stuff. I think I gave you a set of those when I had them duplicated. They begin with the number 1 in their original numbering system, now superceded. However, t is is what they gave the Rockefeller Commission, so there is a hell of a story in that quite separately - that the second Presidential commission had all these leads in the area of its mandate and did nothing.

Afte Agee - with him on a live hookup David Hartmann and Steve Bell asked only pointed, antagonistic questions designed to suggest to listeners that he was a KGB or other agent but noe one question about t is morning's p. 1 story when his book, to which they refer, says he was assigned to Mexico City when in the CIA. Great reporting there, too!

I've read the Post story. There is much wrong with it. If I have time before the mail with what else I want to do I'll add it, otherwise I'dd do that later and separately.

The AP did not see fit to include this story in its B wire from our local paper, which generally prints all it provides on this subject.

Not a leading news item on second half NBC's today Show. But they are having a segment on how you can determine you cat's sanity. Cats being more important than government, newspapers and people in both.

No mention in the 10 minutes of news that followed. It wound up with a repeat on the Concorde from last evening's net TV news.

Lonnie, who is about to be eased out - says today may be his last - will watch for wire copy to the degree he is able to.

No time for full analysis but assuming this is truthful, why would the CIA destroy the tape and edit the transcript if it had no LHL connection? Why would Kessler not ask?

Why does he avoid saying that Phillips was station chief at the time of the assassination and beginning almost immediately after the alleged intercept?

I recall no such transcript in the WC's files. Maybe it is still withheld. Why does Kessler not go into this? It would strengthen his story because he would find that it is withheld at the CIA's request. Probably with a claim to "national security" or "intelligence sources" after the fact of these interceptions is public and my FOIA request for them. Long after.

Only an irrational man would have phoned the Russian Embassy in advance with an offer like t is when he could have walked in, as he did, and then have made the offer. Maybe this accounts for the alleged destruction of the tape.

Kessler asked me, when he phoned, if I thought Duran could have been a CIA agent. I said I did not know but that the CIA's effort to prevent the serious Mexican police harrassment of her could be taken to indicte this. And that all her connections were left. His interview adds nothing to the public record. What it omits is dishonest- told LHO he was an enemy of the revolution.

Quote omits the initial wrong name for LHO

No mention that the FBI was in on this in MexCy from the first on the assassination itself. Its legal attache was stationed in the same station, both in USEmbassy.

Interesting that he quotes Belin in a deliberate lie when I told him in advance that this was not Belin's area and asked if he knew whose it was. He said Slawson. I added Coleman and he said yes. So he does not interview or quote either Coleman or Slawson and quote Belin in a deliberate lie. As head of the Rockefeller Commission Belin saw the C A's Mexico City cable and related communications. He has since asked the CIA for them. I have what he has. So both ways he knows it is a lie "that the CIA did not tell the Warren Commission of the report from an alleged witness to a meeting in Mexico City between Oswald and Cuban intelligence agents." This is the "D" of Alvarado Garte story and is in the commission's files as it is in the CIA's release to Belin, mem, and I'msure others.

Schweiker also lied. This was out during the life of his subcommittee, if the alleged contents were not. Hastily,

a.m. 11/26/76 postscript *To Tom Johnson*

Regardless of the basic accuracy of this morning's Post Kessler story, there is much wrong with it, to Kessler's prior knowledge wrong with it. He did not indicate it was this story but several night ago he did phone me on a JFK story, to ask if I knew a name not in the story.

The reason for this postscript is that this is the second spook leak of what is covered by my long-standing and ignored FOIA requests. The first was the Post story of 11/13 alleging a secret Hoover memo. It is a non-story. Kessler told me they are not proud of it now, a statement not supported by his today's story.

With the surveillance I have long had such an inclusive request with the CIA. So long it is past their claimed lag. They tried to lump it in with my inclusive request. I rejected this, saying I did not want to wait until whatever time in the distant future they would admit to having completed whatever they decided to review.

I knew of these intercepts. When a friend filed an inadequate request I backstopped with an adequate one although I had already included it. Because Schweiker also knew and didnothing I made a separate request. I said I wanted it faster.

Mine also included the interception of Oswald's mail, certain when he was in the USSR.

While I have no way of knowing whether there was any such conversation I do know that the thing is utterly irrational.

The subject of the 11/13 leak is an FBI record.

Jim telegraphed Levi 11/13 and has had no response. Even acknowledgement.

Earlier in affidavitd and beginning 9/16 and for several days in C.A.75-1996 we went into this. We had supervisory FOIA agents on the stand and I testified. They have reviewed these files three times as of them without responding to my requests that go back to 1968. I testified to this without even pro forma cross examination. By then I had a list of these requests made.

I have written Kelley, Levi and Shea repeatedly about this without response.

This is for your FOIA knowledge. In no case has the time of the claimed - and manufactured - backlog not passed with both agencies and DJ.

HW